



Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Municipal Office Building Room #1

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Joe Sina.

2. Roll Call and Alternate Appointments

Members Present: Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Barry Bernard, Gary Wilson, David Walls, Ralph Chappell-East Haddam Land Trust, and Ruth Ziobron.

Members Absent: John Olin, Cameron Beard, Susan Pagnano, and Alan Ponanski.

Alternate Appointments: David Walls and Barry Bernard were appointed.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda adding "Watershed Grant Proposal" under 8b.

Passed Unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Conservation Commission meeting minutes of October 1, 2024.

Bernard/Wilson – Passed Unanimously.

Motion to approve the Conservation Commission meeting minutes of November 20, 2024 (Special Meeting).

Walls/Wilson – Passed Unanimously.

5. General Announcements

- The Commission revisited the request from a community member to remove the old shed at Winterbrook Open Space. Initially, the individual offered to dismantle and remove the shed at no cost to the town. However, based on a message from Mrs. Pagnano, it has been noted that further discussion is needed regarding the logistics of the removal.
- The Hand Property Trail Project is progressing with support from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for bridge materials, and the town will handle construction and maintenance. The town is currently addressing insurance requirements before moving forward with the project.

- The DEEP Forester conducted a walk of the Shugrue Farm Reserve on Long Hill on November 4th at 9 a.m. During this visit, it was agreed that a follow-up visit to Hayward would be made, and a single report would be prepared for both reserves. A final walk of Shugrue is scheduled for December 17th at 10 a.m., after which a report will be provided. The originally planned visit to Hayward was postponed due to DEEP fire control activities. Based on experience, the visit may take 4-5 hours. Let Mr. Beard know if you plan to attend.
- An article about the QR codes for trail maps will be written for the Events Magazine, due January 3rd. The laminated QR codes have been receiving positive feedback, and members will continue to monitor their usage to evaluate whether there is still a need for printed maps.

6. Presentations from the Public

No public presentations were made.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

- The blue trail was painted at the Sabine Reserve.
- Signs were posted at Dean Easement for no hunting.
- Directional posts were added at Shugrue.
- A tree was removed at Chapel Farm Preserve.
- Leaning trees were removed at Gelston Easement.
- The stream bridge was extended at Sabine Reserve.
- A tree was removed at Parker's Preserve.
- A ditch will be filled in at Sabine Reserve.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson

An article about the QR codes for trail maps will be written for the Events Magazine, due January 3rd. Another article will focus on monarch butterflies and will be published in the East Haddam News. Additionally, the Commission plans to attend the Spring Fling.

iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin - absent

The Resilient East Haddam Workshop, held on October 24, 2024, was well attended. The next scheduled meeting will take place at the end of February.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls

East Haddam Land Trust's application for expansion of the parking lot at Miller Preserve has been approved, as has been its application for the construction of a wetlands viewing platform at Golet Preserve.

ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis

The public hearing for the Cell Tower at East Haddam-Colchester Turnpike will continue at the next meeting.

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina

The paperwork for the Kronberg property is pending. A walk of the Sprecher Property took place, and it was noted that 2.2 acres abut Harris Lot and Dean. A land swap was discussed to provide Mr. Sprecher with better access to his logging area and provide a link between Harris and Dean for the Town.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard - absent

Unigrid maps will be mailed shortly.

v. Sustainability Committee – Mr. Ponanski - absent

No updates.

C. Planting and Existing Garden Updates

Maintenance of the community garden continues with tarp removal and final watering. Ongoing watering of the oaks and apple trees at the Salmon River Overlook is also continuing. Six white oaks have been repotted in individual pots. A DEEP publication from 2017 offered free wood to conservation groups for building bluebird boxes. Mr. Wilson has been in touch with DEEP and will seek wood for building boxes for placement on our reserves. Mr. Chappell expressed interest in the same for the Land Trust, and Mr. Wilson will ask DEEO if they can provide extra materials for Land use.

D. Reserve Monitor Discussion

Four individuals have volunteered to serve as reserve monitors, based on their reading the article in the Events magazine.

8. New Business

a. Bills:

Motion to approve a signage invoice from Mr. Beard for \$105.55.

Gillis/Wilson – Passed Unanimously.

b. Discussion from Commission Members:

Watershed Grant Proposal

A discussion took place regarding a Watershed Grant Proposal sent by Mr. Olin, with a copy included at the end of these meeting minutes. Mr. Sina compiled feedback and ideas from the committee discussions:

Summary of discussion – Watershed Grant Proposal

At the 3 Dec meeting of the Conservation Commission, a grant proposal for a Watershed Grant was discussed (proposal attached to minutes). To summarize the discussion, the

commissioners felt that they needed more information before taking action. The main points are summarized below.

1. The biggest questions revolved around what the deliverables would be. The write-up did state that the project would animate fine art of various species and ecosystems and provide a “venue for original art work”, but would it be a series of videos created by Lifeforms, a hands-on program for the users to create their own animations or journals, or a tool for teachers who would create appropriate art work to incorporate into their lesson plans?
2. The proposal referenced ‘digital platforms accompanied by creative exercises’, but we had a hard time envisioning how this would stem from ‘animation of fine art’. It was suggested that we have someone from Lifeforms attend a meeting to make a brief presentation showing what they are envisioning.
3. Who would be driving the content of the delivered product? Would Lifeforms determine which species and ecosystems to include, perhaps based on previous data they had collected, or is content up to the sponsoring bodies?
4. Has there been a commitment from teachers in the E. Haddam schools or the Eightmile River Watershed organization to incorporate the deliverables into their curriculum or programs? It would seem that it would be better to know that there is an immediate need for this tool before spending the time and finding that, while interesting, it may or may not find application for any number of reasons. It would also seem that those who would use the delivered product should be consulted on what their needs would be and have a voice in the development and the content.

In summary, while this seems an intriguing idea, as the proposal states “many details need to be worked out”, and the commissioners would like more clarity from Lifeforms and/or potential users before moving forward with a motion to support this proposal.

13. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

14. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.

15. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:26 PM.

Gillis/Wilson/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

E. Ruth Ziobron

Recording Secretary

Watershed Grant Proposal

To fulfill their commitment to public education, the East Haddam Conservation Commission (EHCC) and the East Haddam Sustainability Team (EHST) have an opportunity to apply for a **Watershed Grant** administered by the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Coordinating Committee (ERWSCC).

Education is noted as Priority 3 outlined in the Watershed Management Plan of the ERWSCC. This grant would be designed to promote the Eightmile River Watershed's Outstanding Resource Values (ORVs). Two of the six ORVs have been identified for the focus of this proposed project: 1. Unique Species and Natural Communities; 2. Intact Watershed Ecosystem.

At the suggestion of Pat Young of the ERWSCC, the two municipal bodies would partner with Lifeforms, Inc. an educational media company based in Madison, CT (website Lifeforms.bio). Lifeforms looks at nature through the medium of fine art and uses animation technology to bring such renderings to contemporary audiences. The collaboration between the municipal bodies and Lifeforms, Inc. would result in interactive digital platforms accompanied by creative exercises. Anticipated audiences would be 13years +, for the general public, East Haddam schools, and our community.

The grant would be used to develop the following educational modules: 1. Unique Species and Natural Communities: a. The project would animate examples of fine art representing the rare species and natural communities in the watershed. b. The project will provide a venue for original artwork or other expression (i.e. journals) related to these species and communities. 2. Natural Communities and Intact Watershed Ecosystems: a. The project will animate examples of fine art representing the species and communities in the watershed. b. The project will provide a venue for original artwork or other expression (i.e. journals) related to these ecosystem examples

We are requesting funding at the \$ 7,500 level. Due to the innovative nature of the project, we would like to reserve the possibility of requesting a further \$7,500 should the project so require it for completion.

Many details need to be worked out. The grant application would be made in the the first month of the new year. I am introducing the project for your approval to go ahead with this collaborative educational project.

Thank you,

John Olin

EHCC